



# COVID -19

CORONAVIRUS

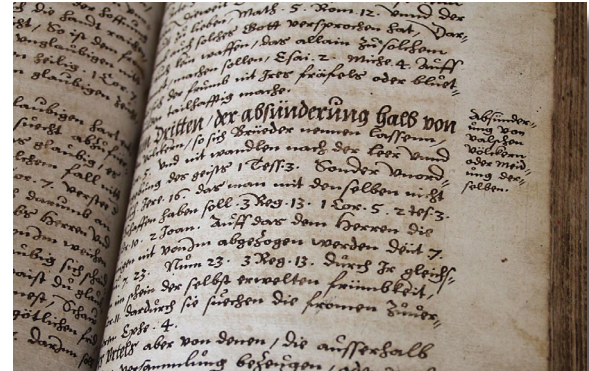
BULLETIN #2 March 24, 2020



## Historical Research

### Epidemic Deaths in Hutterite Communities

Every day, people from around the globe are watching as the Covid-19 virus spreads to every corner of the world. Hutterites, like many other people, struggle to grasp the magnitude of what is happening. As a result, the Hutterite responses to the coronavirus have been varied. Some Hutterite communities have deemed it prudent to strictly follow the guidelines and recommendations put forward by the medical professionals. Heeding these orders seem very wise in light of the many examples within our historical writings which highlight how devastating epidemics can be.



The following excerpts reporting pandemic deaths have all been taken from **Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume II.**

"In 1541, around St. James Day [July 25], the plague broke out in Moravia and lasted throughout the winter into the year 1542, and God visited his people with the same sickness. Quite a number of the believers were taken to their last resting place." [page 61]

"In 1580 a severe epidemic broke out at Wostitz. The illness started with coughing, sore throat, and headache. Hardly any escaped it, and many died." [page 142]

"In 1620, the Hungarian sickness broke out among the fugitives. So many were lying ill that they were unable to take proper care of one another. Consequently, five hundred people died within a short time at the aforementioned places on the other side of the Hungarian mountains." [page 183]

"In 1622, three different sicknesses broke out among the people inside and outside the community, and in this way, in one year, the Lord took four hundred men, women, and children out of their misery into his rest." [page 185]

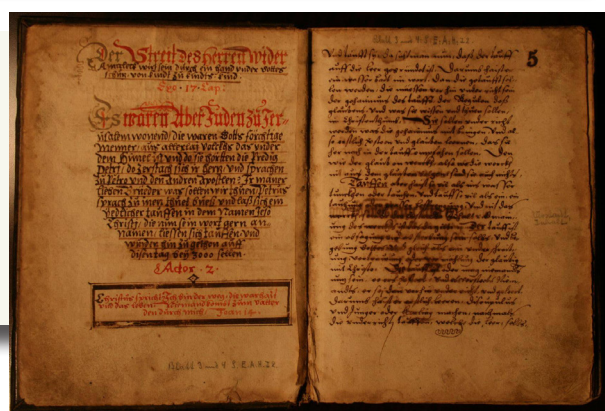
Again, in 1622 Johannes Waldner reported "that one-third of our people died that year [of the plague]. As a result, the church community which survived at Sabatisch and neighbouring places in Hungary was quite small." [page 271]

## Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, Volume II. excerpts cont.:

In 1655, during September, a terrible epidemic swept through the land, causing many deaths. At Velke Lawär about 270 of our people died a pitiful death. [page 246]

"About the year 1738, another terrible epidemic of plague-ravaged Transylvania, killing many inhabitants. It swept through the community at Alwinz, too. Brother Joseph Kur lay sick with the pestilence for six weeks, and although he survived, he lost his brother and his first wife from the disease...The pestilence first broke out among the townspeople. Houses where someone had died, or only lay sick, were locked and barred. Any sick person inside had to lie helpless and perished miserably." [page 317]

"During 1646 plague was raging in Transylvania. In many towns and villages, a large part of the inhabitants had died. The sickness attacked the church-community as well, and many lost their lives. People say that one did not ask, 'Who has died?' but 'How many?'" [page 262]



Even here in North America, the number of Hutterites who have died because of influenza [a kind of flu] is much higher than most Hutterites realize. One of the more recent instances took place in 1874 when "no less than 36" children succumbed to dysentery in Nebraska when our foreparents migrated from Russia. [Chronicle II, page 747.]

Similarly, the Spanish flu (virus) of 1918-1920 infected 500 million people—about a quarter of the world's population at the time. The death toll is estimated to have been as high as 100 million, making it one of the deadliest epidemics in human history.

During that time, many Hutterites also lost their lives. Because we have been far too lax in recording our history, many Hutterites are not aware of these facts. The following preliminary numbers record the deaths by influenza of various Hutterites in South Dakota during this era. In Wolf Creek, 47 persons; Old Elm Spring, 80 persons; Rockport, 25, and Rosedale, 14 persons. Some people reckon the number of children who died of influenza in South Dakota during this time as high as 180.

The purpose of shining light on the epidemic deaths in our past is not to frighten people, but to inform Hutterite communities and leaders about the historical reality of epidemics. We hope this will encourage appropriate actions to protect the vulnerable in our communities. Epidemics have been a part of our past, are here in the present, and will likely come again in the future. We cannot stop these outbreaks from happening, but we can mitigate damage by acting responsibly and wisely.

Any questions or concerns please contact HSC directly at:  
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